

# DNREC marks American Wetlands Month with ongoing efforts to restore wetlands, raise awareness and encourage actions



DNREC scientists planting spartina alterniflora grass in the Piney Point Marsh in Dagsboro.

**DOVER** –This month DNREC observes American Wetlands Month with ongoing efforts to restore wetlands, raise awareness of their values and benefits, and encourage actions to protect them.

“American Wetlands Month is a great time to discover the importance of wetlands and the significant benefits they provide,” said DNREC Secretary David Small. “Wetlands contribute to our quality of life in Delaware by protecting people and property from flooding and coastal storms, filtering pollutants from water, providing vital fish and wildlife habitat and helping reduce the impacts of sea level rise. Efforts to protect and restore wetlands are critical to ensuring their valuable services.”

Scientists from DNREC’s Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Program are performing new research into the best methods for planting wetland-sustaining *Spartina alterniflora* grass at the Piney Point marsh on Pepper Creek in Dagsboro. Along with filling in bare spots with 3,500 plants in the marsh, this project will further wetland restoration research by helping to determine if *Spartina alterniflora* survival rates are improved depending upon the planting process.

Spartina grass planting is part of a beneficial-reuse marsh restoration project to restore critical wetlands, preserve wildlife habitat and improve overall water quality in the area. The project, a collaborative effort with the Center for the Inland Bays, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other Divisions at DNREC, applied dredge material from Pepper Creek back onto tidal wetlands to help maintain surface elevations above rising sea levels and increase plant cover and surface stability.

Other wetland projects also are underway or on the horizon. Scientists with DNREC's Delaware Coastal Programs are conducting on-going wetland monitoring efforts at St. Jones and Blackbird Creek Reserves. By measuring the long-term changes to marsh heights, scientists are obtaining valuable data on whether the wetlands are keeping pace with sea level rise.

This summer, DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife will be working on two wetland restorations in the Delaware Bayshore. At Little Creek Wildlife Area east of Dover, scientists will restore 450 acres of wetlands by installing new water control structures to better manage water levels and improve habitat for migratory shorebirds and wildlife. At Ted Harvey Wildlife Area near Kitts Hummock, work will begin on rebuilding a dike and installing a water control structure that will restore more than 400 acres of critical wetlands.

DNREC's Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Program will participate in the National Wetland Condition Assessment starting in June, a survey organized by the EPA that will provide valuable data that can be used to track wetland changes over time, design restoration plans and better understand how certain land use decisions affect the health of wetlands.

In support of American Wetlands Month, DNREC's Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Program has organized programs that

raise awareness about wetland health and benefits and encourage actions to protect them.

- **“Capture the Moment: I am a Wetland” Digital Photo Contest**

Enter photos of wetlands in Delaware that capitalize on the many wetland types that vary from forested seasonal ponds, to highly productive salt marshes, to unique Bald Cypress swamps. Submissions are due by June 9. More information available on [www.de.gov/delawarewetlands](http://www.de.gov/delawarewetlands)

- **The Delaware Wetland Warrior Award and the Delaware Wetland Apprentice Award.** Nominations for both awards are being accepted through June 24. Governor Jack Markell and DNREC Secretary David Small will present the awards at the Delaware State Fair in July.

- The **Delaware Wetland Warrior Award**, now in its ninth year, is presented annually to a citizen, organization or business that has demonstrated exemplar effort to benefit Delaware wetlands in the areas of outreach and education, monitoring and assessment, or restoration and protection.

- The **Delaware Wetland Apprentice Award**, new for 2016, recognizes a K-12th grade student, classroom or school that has volunteered or completed a project that evaluates, improves or educates about the condition of Delaware’s wetlands.

- **Find wetland fun facts, photos from the field and educational resources** on the Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Program’s [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) pages.

- **“Wetlands 101” video series** – [“Restoring Wetlands: Restoration Stories”](#) – available on DNREC’s YouTube Channel – Check out the sixth installment of DNREC’s “Wetlands 101” that focuses on some of the common problems wetlands are up against and explores Delaware sites that have gone through the restoration process.

- **Explore a wetland** by [visiting one of the state’s many](#)

[environmental areas](#), including a Delaware State Park, DNREC's DuPont Nature Center, DNREC's Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve or a State Wildlife Area. Whether it's visiting one of the nature centers or taking a hike through a park, wetlands are easily accessible across the state. On a visit, take a picture and tag #AmericanWetlandsMonth to spread the word.

For more information about Delaware's wetlands, please like the [Delaware Wetlands](#) Facebook page, follow Delaware Wetlands on [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#), or visit [de.gov/delawarewetlands](http://de.gov/delawarewetlands).

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